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SUBJECT: RODINA: SATISFIED BUT SUING

REF: A. MOSCOW 11413
[1](#)B. MOSCOW 10861

Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) Rodina had a poor showing in the October 8 regional elections; it crossed the 7 percent threshold for representation in only one region: Astrakhan. Nevertheless, Deputy Chair of Rodina's Executive Committee Maksim Puchkov in an October 12 conversation found cause for optimism in the votes won by the three parties of the "relevant left" (Rodina, the Russian Party of Life, and the Russian Party of Pensioners). Puchkov told the Embassy that Rodina planned to bring suits alleging impropriety at the ballot box in three regions: Astrakhan, Tuva, and Sverdlovsk. Rodina would lead the planned three-party coalition because it was deserving as "the only party with an ideology," not because its Duma seats provided a platform for legislative initiatives as Sergey Mironov, head of the would-be coalition partner Russian Party of Life, had asserted. End summary.

October 8 Election Results

[1](#)2. (U) In October 8 regional elections, Rodina won 16.5 percent of the vote in Astrakhan and crossed the 7 percent threshold for regional legislative representation. It almost qualified in Chuvashiya as well, where it won 6.5 percent of the vote. In five other regions (the Jewish Autonomous Republic, Novgorod, Primorye, Sverdlovsk, and Tuva), Rodina reaped between 2.3 percent to 4.5 percent of the ballots. In Karelia and Lipetsk, it was not included on the ballot.

[1](#)3. (U) Those results notwithstanding, Deputy Chair of Rodina's Executive Committee Maksim Puchkov told us on October 12 that he was pleased and that the returns boded well for the March 2007 regional elections. Puchkov contended that the three parties of the incipient coalition had won 30 percent in the regions. (Embassy's calculations do not match this assessment on a region-by-region basis, and Yuriy Korguniuk of Indem and other analysts speculate that the sum of the three will be even less than that of its parts.)

Bringing Lawsuits

[1](#)4. (U) Puchkov claimed there had been irregularities throughout the regions. Not only had voters been told how to vote, but in Astrakhan votes that had originally been

"against all" were tallied as ballots for United Russia. Rodina will be bringing suit against the regional election commission in Astrakhan, said Puchkov. It would also be going to court in Tuva and in Sverdlovsk, where it alleged there had been improper use of administrative resources. Suits were contemplated in other regions, as well.

¶5. (U) Puchkov agreed that the courts could take as long as six months to reach a verdict in the cases, but he seemed unconcerned about the timeline, and thought it unlikely that the verdicts, even if reached before the March 2007 regional elections, would have an impact.

Future of Rodina

¶6. (U) Both Puchkov and Pavel Shashkin, of Rodina's international division, were optimistic about Rodina's future. Their party's strength was its ideology, which would not change with the whims of the administration, as was the case with the Kremlin-sponsored United Russia. They described Rodina's platform as "attractive" and based on conservative values associated with the Orthodox Church and a desire to re-generate Russia's domestic industries. (Moscow observers concluded (ref a) that the more "ideological" parties did not fare well in the October 8 elections.)

¶7. (U) Puchkov disagreed with Russian Party of Life Chairman Mironov's assertion that Rodina would form the "basis" of the new coalition party only because it had State Duma seats. (Mironov said that he hoped to use Rodina's Duma faction to introduce new legislation. Duma representation also gives the new, coalition party access to government subsidies.)

¶8. (U) In addition to possible disagreements with its future coalition partners in Moscow, arguments over who will head the coalition in the regions are increasingly surfacing in the press. Additionally, there are press rumors that some within Rodina will resist the planned, three-party merger.

¶9. (U) Despite these fault lines and United Russia's continuing firm grip on power, Puchkov was confident that the new coalition would do well in the March regional elections. (The March 11 elections will be held in 17 regions and are the last major elections before the State Duma contest.)

Comment

¶10. (SBU) Rodina representatives' seeming lack of concern about the October 8 election results and their party's role in the three-party coalition to be formalized October 28 may be the belief that Rodina will do better in the March regional contests due to the administrative resources it will receive as one of the Kremlin's favored two parties. Ex-party chief Dmitriy Rogozin (ref b) retains a high profile, including on television and in the Duma, where he has used the anti-Georgian campaign to push for his brand of "enlightened nationalism."

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